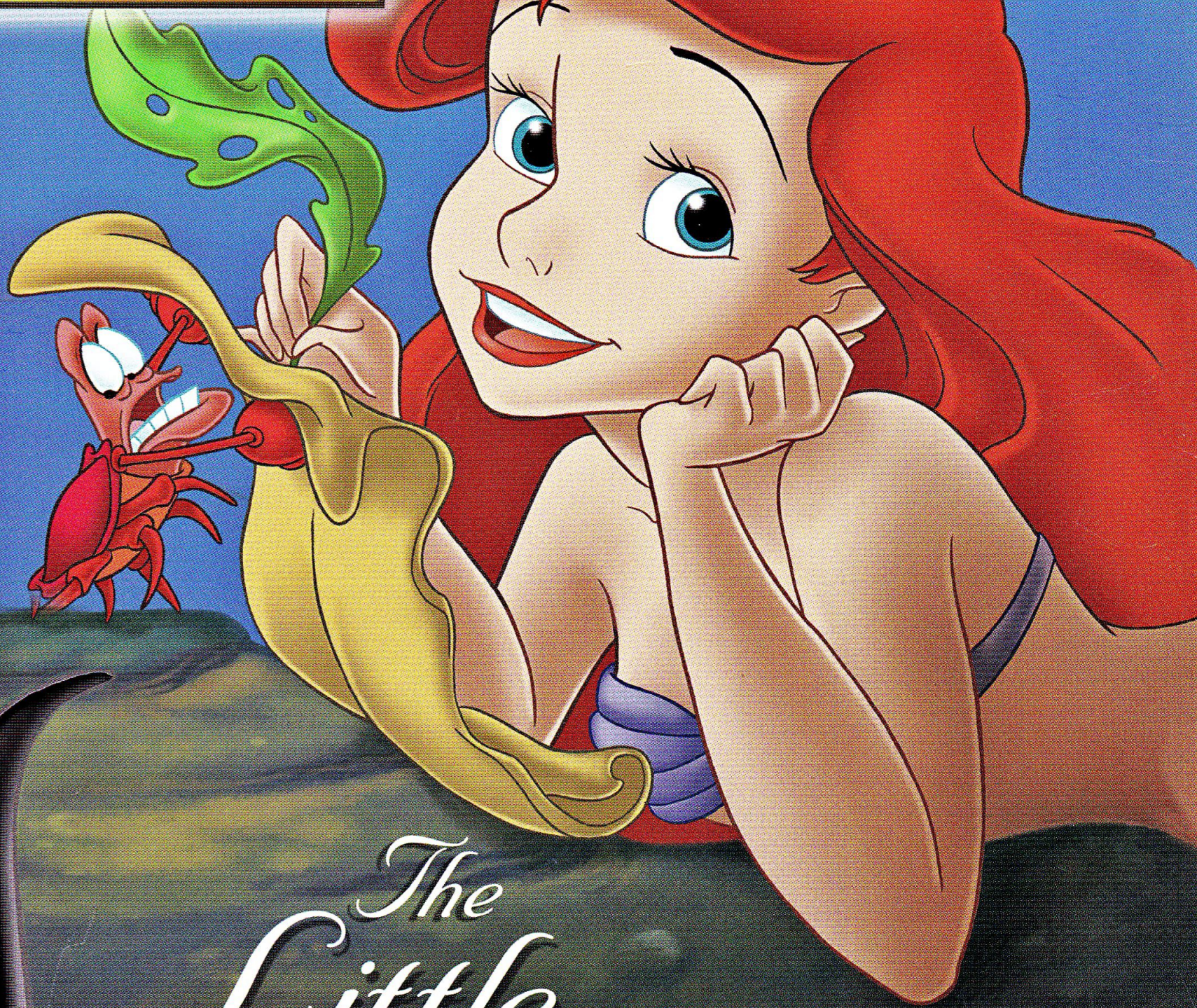




*Flip this book
over to hear the
other side of
the story!*

MY SIDE of the Story



*The
Little
Mermaid*



MY SIDE
of the Story



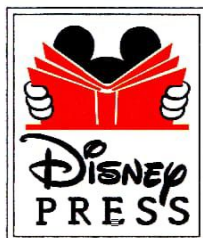
MY SIDE
of the Story



By *Ariel*

As told to Daphne Skinner

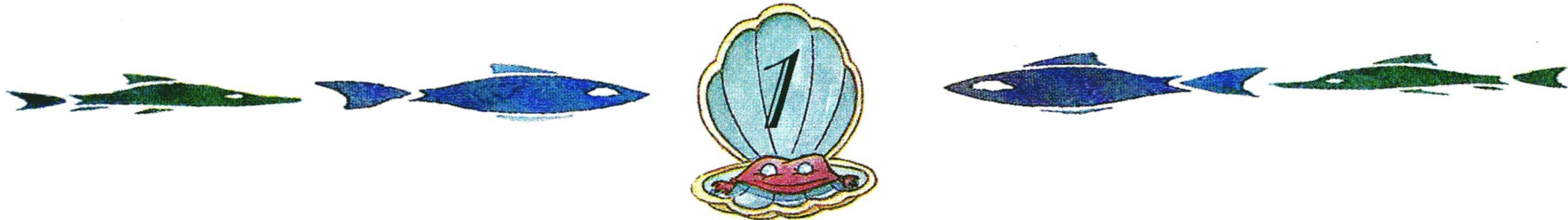
Illustrated by the Disney Storybook Artists



New York







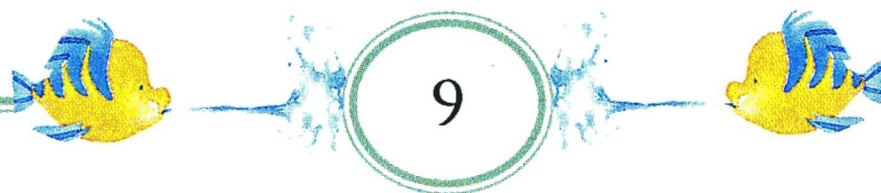
Hot Water, As Usual

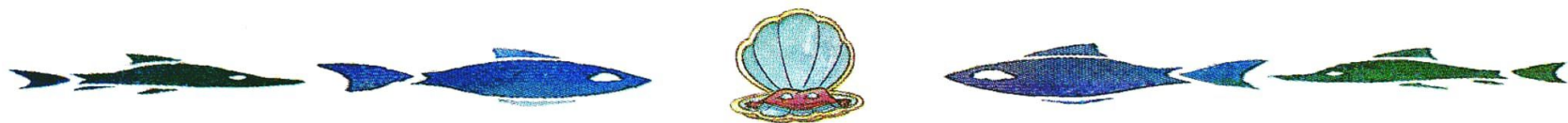
*M*y name is Ariel, and I am always getting into trouble. The reason for this is my curiosity. Sebastian the crab is forever shaking his claw at me and saying, “Ariel, curiosity killed the crustacean!” But I’m not a crustacean—I’m a mermaid, so why should I worry?

If only my father, King Triton, felt the same way! Every time I disappear to do a little exploring, he gets as huffy as a blowfish. And if he suspects I’ve been “up there”—above the surface of the ocean—he roars like a sea lion.

“Stay away from those barbarian fish eaters,” he rages, waving his magic trident. “They cause nothing but trouble!”

I always promise to stay where I belong, in the world of the merfolk. And I mean to—really, I do. Then curiosity calls, and off I swim.





One day, for example, I missed my debut concert because I was exploring a sunken ship. I didn't intend to miss the concert. But—and this is a big “but”—that morning, when I was practicing singing, I kept thinking about two human things I'd found in a sunken ship. One was metal, with a long handle and four metal teeth; the other was wooden and curvy, with holes at either end.

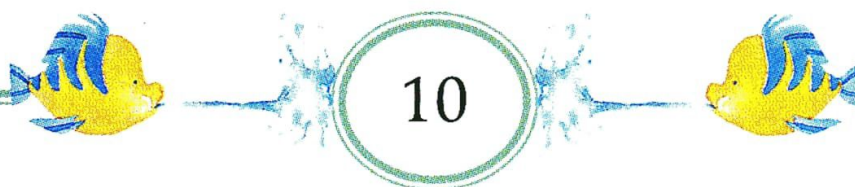
What *were* they? I tried to concentrate on my music—I really did—but the question pulled at me like an undertow, and before I knew it, I had stopped singing and started swimming to the surface with my best friend, Flounder. I was looking for Scuttle. He's a wise old seagull, and he's an expert when it comes to humans, because he flies around in their world all day long. He recognized the long skinny thing right away.

“It's a dinglehopper,” he said, “an indispensable grooming tool.” He demonstrated by running it through his crest, and it improved his appearance like magic.

“As for this,” he said, examining the curved wooden thing, “it's a banded, bulbous snarfblatt—a very fine one.” I must have looked confused, because he added, “Humans make music with it.”

“Music?” The instant he said it, I remembered the concert, and my heart dropped to my tail fin. “Oh, no!” I moaned.

Guess what? I was in hot water again.









Grotto with a View

Flounder and I hurried back to the throne room as fast as we could, but the concert had been over for hours. My father was furious.

"I don't know what to do with you, young lady—I really don't!" he scolded.

"I'm sorry, Father," I said. "I forgot."

Then Flounder tried to explain where we'd been, which was unfortunate, because as soon as my father heard that we'd visited Scuttle, he knew we'd been "up there"—near humans.

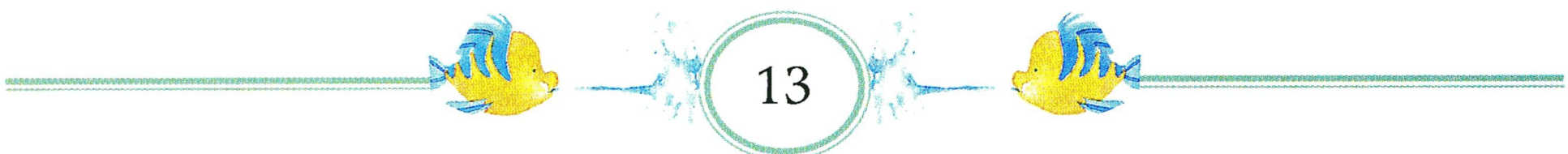
As I may have mentioned, he hates them.

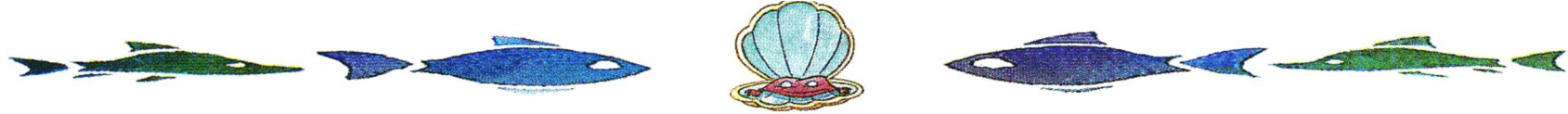
"How many times have I told you to keep away from those hook-happy barbarians?" he stormed. "They're dangerous!"

I disagree, but I knew I couldn't change his mind, so all I did was remind him very calmly that I was sixteen years old and I could take care of myself, which for some reason made him even angrier.

"Ariel! I am never to hear of your going up there again!" he thundered. "Do you understand?"

Unfortunately, I did. I swam away with my tail fin drooping, wishing that my father understood *me* better. The only thing that could cheer me up, I decided, was a visit to the grotto.





Flounder came along with me to the grotto. And it did cheer me up to be there. I love it because it's secret—tucked behind a coral reef, veiled by a seaweed grove—and all my treasures from “up there” are in the grotto. Some came from shipwrecks; others drifted out to sea on the tides. I didn't know what they were, but I was sure I'd find out one day. Then everything in my collection would make perfect sense to me, like the dinglehopper and the snarfblatt.

Suddenly, Flounder and I heard a loud crash. He darted away fearfully (he can be a real guppy sometimes!), but curiosity pulled me like a fishing line, right to the noise.

Which is where I found Sebastian. He was spying on me!

Sebastian acted very crabby, even for a crab. Plus, he asked so many questions about the grotto and my collection that I got as jumpy as a jellyfish. If he told my father . . .

Sure enough, he said, “If your father knew about this—”

“—he'd never understand!” I finished. “Please, don't tell him, Sebastian! Pretty please, with plankton on top!”

Sebastian frowned. And then I saw a mysterious shadow many fathoms above us. What could it be? I just had to find out! Forgetting Sebastian, I swam straight up the grotto, higher and higher, until I reached the surface.

Something—a huge dark shape, bigger than the biggest whale I've ever seen—loomed ahead of me. Suddenly, it erupted with beautiful sparkly lights, like rainbow-tinted shooting stars, and the sky around it turned bright with color.

Guess what? It was a ship. And music was coming from it.

Wild sea horses couldn't keep me away!









I swam right up and peered up at the deck. Though I am sixteen years old and very grown-up, what I saw and heard at the ship made me feel like a merchild again. It was all so new and amazing!

The music was as loud and happy as anything in our kingdom. I started swaying to the music, until a big, friendly, four-legged creature came over and licked my face.

"Who are you?" I whispered.

"Woof," he replied, wagging his tail. Then he repeated it, to make sure I got it right: "Woof."

"Hello, Woof," I said. "I'm Ariel." I had all kinds of questions to ask him, but then everybody started clapping and cheering and calling out "Happy Birthday, Prince Eric!" and the handsomest man I had ever seen walked out on deck. He had blue eyes, and beautiful knees.

Woof ran off to greet him, and it was clear they were good friends, even though Eric kept getting Woof's name wrong. He insisted on calling him Max—not that Woof seemed to mind.

I could see that Eric was good and kind as well as handsome, and when he strolled near me with his friend Grimsby, I nearly did a belly flop. But I stayed where I was, so I could listen to their conversation.

"You know, Prince Eric," said Grimsby, "the entire kingdom wishes you would settle down with the right girl."

"She's out there," replied Eric. "I just haven't found her yet."

"Maybe you're not looking hard enough," said Grimsby.

That's right! I thought. Here I am, only a few feet away!

"When I find her, I'll know," said Eric. "It'll hit me like lightning."

A clap of thunder drowned out Grimsby's reply.





Lightning Strikes

I've always liked storms because they're exciting and colorful. But this one was different. It showed me how dangerous storms can be to humans: destroying ships and taking lives. I didn't like it at all.

It came on quickly, with lightning, thunder, and roaring winds. The moon disappeared. The waves got higher and higher, tossing Eric's ship around as if it were a stick of driftwood. The sailors on board struggled to control it, but it was useless. When lightning struck a mast, sparking a fire, the men let down the lifeboats and escaped.

Then Eric saw that Woof was still on the burning deck. So he swam back to the ship and persuaded him to jump into the ocean. Two heartbeats later, Woof was safe.

I knew you were good and kind and had wonderful legs, I thought, watching Eric. Now I know you're brave and loyal and a good swimmer, too. I waited for him to follow Woof to the lifeboat.

Before he got there, a sudden explosion blew the ship to smithereens. Eric landed in the water, unconscious. As he began to sink, I could hear Grimsby and the others shouting his name desperately. They were trying to find him, but they didn't know where to look.







But luckily, *I* did.

I caught up to him far below the surface and hauled him ashore, praying he was still alive. But on the beach I began to lose hope. He didn't even seem to be breathing.

Then Scuttle found us. "Is he—?" I couldn't finish the question, but Scuttle knew what I meant. He picked up Eric's foot, listened to it, and shook his head.

"There's no pulse," he said mournfully.

I sat there with my heart breaking. And then—I'm not even sure why—I began to sing.

Suddenly, Eric stirred. He was alive! His eyes opened and found mine. He smiled as if he recognized me!

Then Grimsby showed up, and I fled. As I dove into the waves, I heard Eric say, "A girl rescued me, Grim. She had the most beautiful voice!" It made me as happy as a clam.

I stayed happy, too, thinking about Eric and figuring out how I could see him again.

"It won't be hard," I told Sebastian later that day. "I'll swim to his castle. Flounder will get his attention by splashing—"

Sebastian waved his claws in dismay. "You belong here, Ariel, under the sea!" he cried. "Forget Eric!"

"That's impossible," I said. "I love him. I've got to find a way to be with him."

Guess what? I should have kept my big mouth shut.







Legs Are Expensive

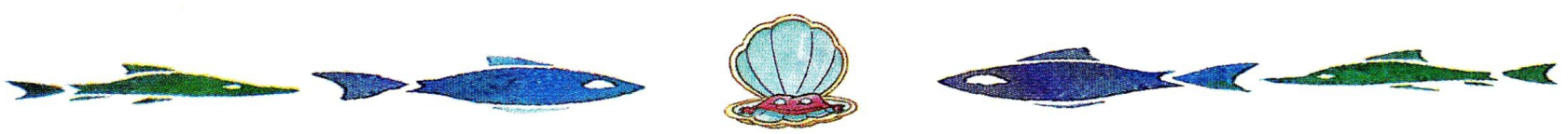
I was in the grotto when my father found me. He was angry when he showed up, because Sebastian had told him I'd saved a human. He got angrier when he saw my collection of human things, which I'd kept secret from him. And when I made the mistake of defending Eric, he flew into a tsunami-sized rage. Before it was over, he had used his magic trident to destroy my precious collection and blast the grotto to rubble.

I collapsed in tears.

Much later, when I was alone, a pair of kindly eels slithered by and expressed their sympathy. They offered to lead me to Ursula the sea witch, saying she could help me with Eric.

Can that be true? I wondered. There was only one way to find out. So I followed them.





Ursula didn't exactly have a good reputation in our kingdom. I'd heard rumors that she used her magic to trap merfolk and make them her slaves, so I was a little nervous about meeting her. And I can't say I really liked her long, grabby tentacles or her gravelly voice. But she was eager to help me. That was the important thing.

"The solution to your problem is simple," she told me. "The only way to make Eric love you is to become human."

If I'm human, I'll have to leave my father's kingdom forever! I thought with alarm.

"I'll give you a potion that will make you human for three days," Ursula went on. "If Eric kisses you before sundown on the third day, you'll stay human forever. If he doesn't kiss you, you'll turn back into a mermaid—and belong to me."

Of course he'll kiss me, I thought, remembering the way he'd looked into my eyes and smiled. We were meant for each other! "I'll do it," I said.

Then Ursula told me she wanted my voice in exchange for the potion.

"My voice! But—how can I live without it?" I asked. "How will I speak? Or sing? I—I'm not sure—"

"You don't have to live without it," growled Ursula. "You can keep your voice, and live without Eric."

I shook my head. "I love him," I whispered.

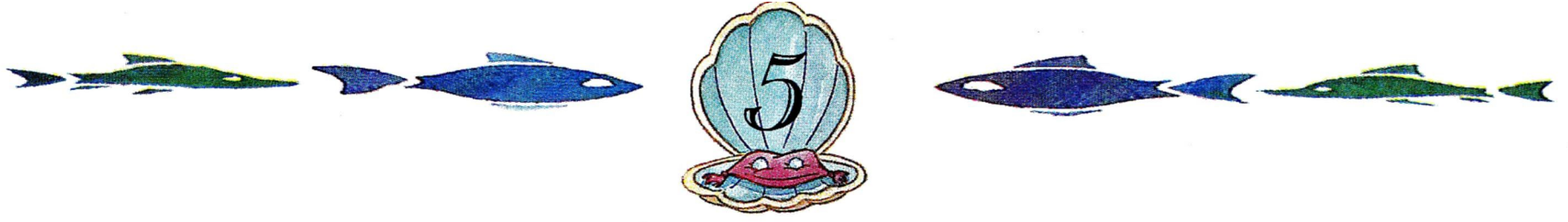
Her tentacles wound around me as I swallowed the potion. "You have three days," she said, laughing hoarsely.

And then she let me go.









Speechless

I have no idea how I landed on the beach, but when I opened my eyes, there I was. And I had legs! They were a little wobbly, but—and this is a big “but”—there were two of them, and they had knees and shins and feet and toenails! I was so happy, I jumped for joy!

When I picked myself up, I saw Flounder, Sebastian, and Scuttle watching from the shallows.

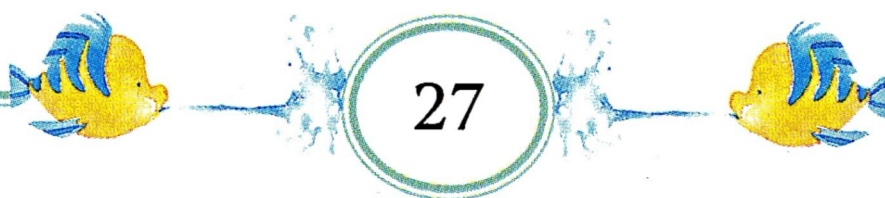
“How do your new legs feel, Ariel?” asked Flounder.

“Wonderful!” I said, but there was no sound. My voice was gone.

Since mermaids don’t wear pants, Sebastian and Scuttle quickly constructed a hasty, yet chic, ensemble for me. Then Eric and Woof appeared. I was so happy to see them! Eric smiled at me and asked me a little shyly if we’d met before. I nodded vigorously. I wanted to remind him about the shipwreck, but how could I? Frustrated, I gestured that I couldn’t speak.

“Oh!” His warm smile faded. “I thought you were someone else,” he said with disappointment, “a girl who sang to me . . .”

I sang to you! I longed to tell him. And I saved your life, too, mister!







I must have looked very unhappy, because then Eric said, "Please—never mind! I—I can see you've had a very difficult time. Let me help you. Come to the palace. You can recover there."

Guess what? I couldn't say no.

As a matter of fact, I couldn't say anything at all.

I spent the next three days with Eric, and they were the happiest days I'd ever had. I savored one new experience after another: my first pair of shoes (pink with white bows); my first dinner with Eric (there was a dinglehopper next to my plate—weird!); my first dance (I only tripped once!); and my first carriage ride (I drove!).

All along, I was wondering when I'd get my first kiss.

So, on the second night, when Eric suggested a boat ride in the moonlight, my heart leaped like a Pacific salmon. How romantic! I thought.

And it was. The lake was calm, beautiful, and secluded. The crickets chirped, and the bullfrogs croaked. Eric rowed slowly, under a moon that gleamed like a giant pearl.

He put down the oars and smiled at me.

I smiled back.

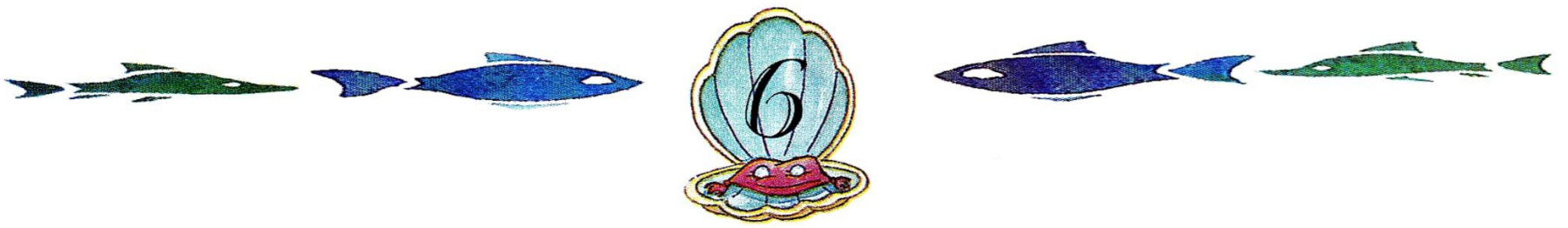
He leaned over and took my hand.

I shut my eyes. This is it! I thought.

And then—the boat capsized! I flopped overboard, my new legs flailing. I was so disappointed!

As I may have mentioned, Eric is a good swimmer. He pulled me out quickly. But before he did, while I was still underwater, I could have sworn I heard peals of hoarse laughter.





Vanessa

“Dry yourself off, child,” said Sebastian, “and get ready for bed.” We were in my room at the palace, and I had just finished trying to act out what had happened at the lake. I’m not sure he understood all of it, but he could see that I was wet and disappointed, and he probably guessed the rest. “Just go to sleep,” he said soothingly. “And don’t worry. The prince will kiss you tomorrow.”

The next morning, just as I was waking up, Scuttle flew in through the window, screeching with excitement.

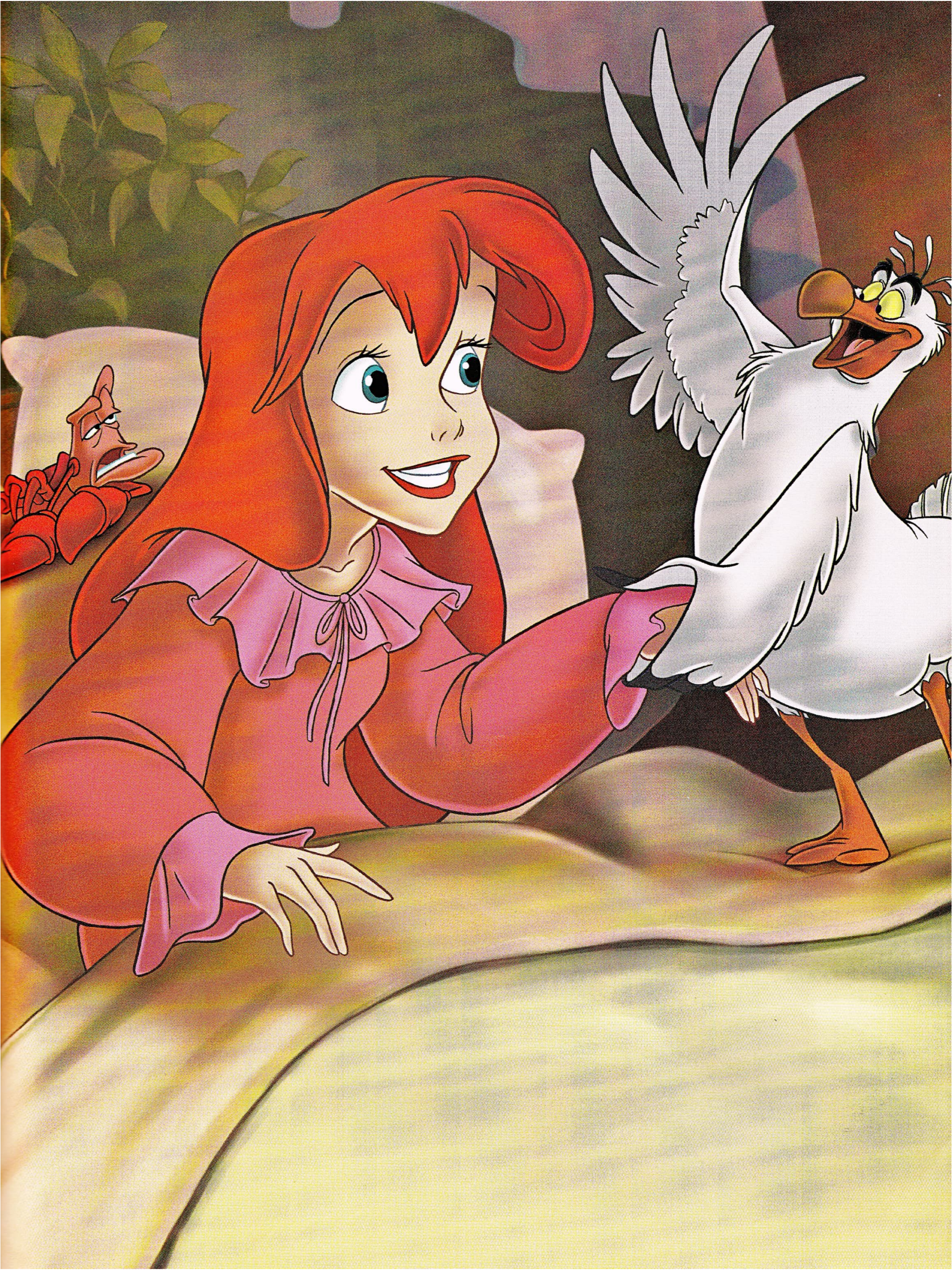
“Wake up!” he cawed. “I just heard the news! The whole town is talking about it!”

“What is that crazy bird saying?” Sebastian asked, crabbily.

“The prince is getting married!” Scuttle landed on my pillow and flapped his wings at me. “Get up, you lazy girl, and congratulations!”

As I may have mentioned, Scuttle is a very wise bird. So even though I couldn’t ask him the many, many questions I had about the wedding, and Eric’s decision, and what I should wear for the ceremony, I believed what he said. I jumped out of bed, feeling very happy.









Barely pausing to run a dinglehopper through my hair, I hurried out to find Eric. I didn't have far to go. He was in the throne room, talking to Grimsby, with a strange woman at his side. She was smiling, holding his arm as if she owned him.

I stopped on the landing and stared.

"Of course, Your Majesty," Grimsby said, sounding a little flustered. "We can arrange the wedding today if that's your wish."

"It is my wish," replied Eric blankly. "Vanessa and I want to marry as soon as possible. Have the barge ready at sunset."

I felt as if I'd been slapped in the face with an electric eel. Who was Vanessa? Where did she come from? Why was Eric marrying her? And why did he want a barge?

My eyes filled with tears. The only one who could answer my questions was Eric. And he'd forgotten me.

I cried all day. I didn't want to believe that Eric was marrying Vanessa, but I had to—I'd seen them board the wedding barge with my own eyes. I was lower than a sand crab's belly.

"The witch is in the mirror! Vanessa isn't Vanessa!" Scuttle hurtled into my room, flapping and cawing and making such a commotion that I actually stopped crying.

"What are you trying to say, bird?" demanded Sebastian.

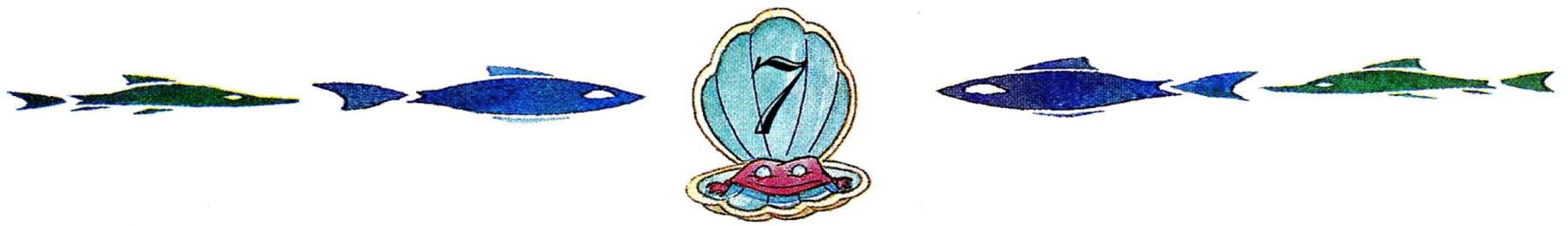
"I saw Vanessa on the barge!" cried Scuttle. "But in the mirror she was Ursula! She's marrying the prince in disguise!"

"Are you sure about this?" asked Sebastian.

"I am!" squawked Scuttle.

I leaped to my feet. I wasn't going to let Eric marry that witch. I'd stop the wedding, even if I had to swim to the barge!





Sunset

It wasn't until I hit the water that I remembered I couldn't swim anymore. I splashed around helplessly, choking and sputtering, until Sebastian hitched me up to Flounder, who hauled me out to sea.

It was a big job for such a little fish. Flounder swam and swam, pulling me along, until he was so exhausted that I thought he'd give up. But—and this is a huge “but”—he didn't. He got me to the barge just as the sun was setting.

I will never call you a guppy again, I vowed silently.

I climbed aboard, ready to do almost anything to stop the wedding. But Scuttle had saved me the trouble. What a genius! I thought, watching him lead an army of seals, dolphins, pelicans, lobsters, and starfish against Vanessa. They doused her with water. They tripped her and pinched her. They pushed her into the wedding cake. They even called her a few bad names.

It was thrilling.

Then Scuttle himself attacked her, tugging at the pendant she wore around her neck. I couldn't understand why, or how come she was fighting so hard to keep it. After all, it was just a necklace.









In their struggle, the pendant fell and shattered, releasing a golden light. “No!” screamed Vanessa. The light streamed across the deck and rose to my throat. My voice had come back!

“Eric!” I trilled joyously. His face lost its blankness, and he ran to my side on his wonderful shapely legs. “You—you can talk!” He took my hand and gazed at me lovingly.

“Eric! Get away from her!” rasped Vanessa.

Ignoring her, Eric whispered, “It was you all the time! You’re the one!” He leaned down to kiss me.

This is it! I thought. This is really it!

And then the sun set.

Vanessa screamed triumphantly. Suddenly, she was Ursula again, slithering across the deck, waving her tentacles and giving at least one elderly guest a heart attack. “You’re too late, lover boy!” she snarled at Eric.

Before his lips touched mine, I turned back into a mermaid.

“You know, you really should keep better track of the time,” Ursula sneered, as she pulled me down to her lair.

She was right. I’d forgotten that this was the third evening of the third day, when Ursula’s potion would stop working. Now, here I was, with a tail, and without the man I loved.

“Stop, sea witch!” My father coursed into Ursula’s lair, brandishing his trident and looking as fearsome as a Category 6 hurricane.

“Why, King Triton!” she answered with evil coyness. “What brings you here?”

“My daughter!” he shouted. “Let her go!”





"Oh, no," replied Ursula, winding another tentacle around me. "She's mine now. We had a deal."

"That's a lie!" he protested.

"It's not, Daddy," I told him sadly. "It's true." I felt Ursula's tentacles loosening, not because she was letting me go, but because her terrible magic was shrinking me and making me weak. "I'm sorry!" I gasped to my father with the last of my strength.

He shook his head, too overcome to speak.

Ursula slithered up next to him. "You know, Triton," she said, "we could always arrange a swap . . . if you catch my drift."

"I—I do," he said. "But let Ariel go first. Then—you can do what you like," he finished brokenly.

"It's a deal!" Chortling, Ursula gave herself a dozen high fives.

What's going on? I wondered, as I began to grow and my father shrank and shrank.

Then I understood. She was taking him instead of me.







More Lightning

“You monster!” I cried. “You’ll never get away with this!”
“Just watch me!” Ursula said, grabbing my father’s trident.

Guess what? Ursula meant it. When Eric appeared and tried to stop her, she shot at him with the trident. She missed and went berserk, howling and raging, getting louder and bigger. For a plus-size octopus, this wasn’t exactly an improvement.

As Eric and I clung together, the sea began to rumble like a whale with indigestion. Ursula shot up out of the water, a thousand times her normal size (which, as I may have mentioned, was bigger than average, even for an octopus), and a thousand times as nasty.

“You insignificant little fools!” she bellowed. “I rule the ocean now!” Waving the trident like a demented conductor, she called up a violent storm. Thunder boomed. Lightning crackled. Towering waves pulled Eric away from me, and he disappeared.

Then she created a powerful whirlpool that sucked me in and spun me around. It also stirred up the ocean floor, raising a sunken ship with a very pointy, broken mast. Ursula didn’t see the ship, or Eric at the wheel, but when the mast jabbed her, she sure felt it.

Then lightning hit her, and she disappeared down into Davy Jones’ locker, never to be seen again.









When the sea was calm again, Eric swam to shore, exhausted. I watched him from a sandbar, glad that he was alive, and loving him more than ever. Only a few feet of ocean separated us. But Eric was still a human and I was still a mermaid, and that, I thought sadly, was that.

But my father thought otherwise. With Ursula gone, his power was restored, and he used it to help me. With one wave of his magic trident, he turned me back into a human.

"Oh, Daddy," I whispered, treading water with my wonderful new legs, "you *do* understand!"

"I only want you to be happy, Ariel," he replied.

"I am!" I cried, spluttering a little—the water was deep.

"And learn to swim for your father, won't you?" he pleaded. "It's not so hard, and then you can visit me."

"And me!" added Sebastian.

"And me!" Flounder chimed in.

"I will!" I promised.

And then I splashed ashore to join my prince.

And we lived happily ever after, of course.



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MY SIDE of the Story

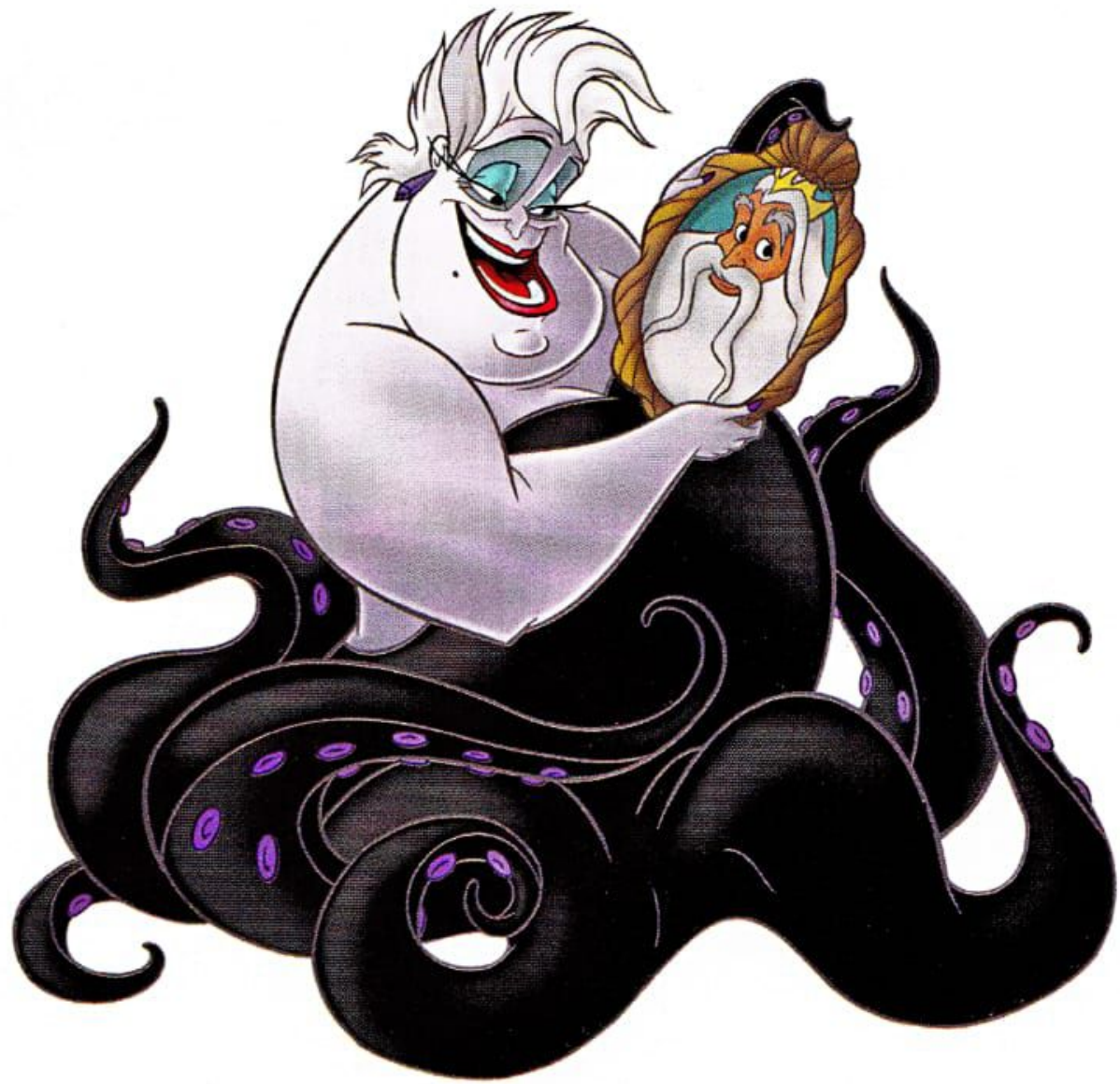
Ursula



*Flip
this book
over to hear
the other side
of the story!*



MY SIDE
of the Story



By Ursula

As told to Daphne Skinner
Illustrated by the Disney Storybook Artists





A Fairy Godmother with Tentacles

My name is Ursula, and certain folks like to call me a witch. They say I tricked Princess Ariel, imprisoned her father, King Triton, and tried to take over the ocean. Whale poop! The truth is, I was absolutely crazy about those two, especially the king. Still am.

As for harming Ariel and Triton, all I can say is this: I didn't mean to. Okay, so I went a little overboard in trying to express my affection. And I let my dark side push me around every now and then. But so what? Everything turned out for the best, didn't it? Give me some credit, please! And don't call me a witch—call me an Octopus Who Loved Too Much—as you listen to *my* side of the story.

I've always been fond of Ariel, even though she isn't the sharpest hook in the tackle box, if you catch my drift. She's sweet but impulsive, and her father, Triton, that incredibly attractive merman, was too busy running his kingdom to keep an eye on her.

Ariel swam around unsupervised a lot, which wasn't the safest thing to do. The sharks don't exactly improve the neighborhood, and if you've got a few years to waste, I'll tell you what's wrong with the stingrays. If you don't, here's the condensed version: aqua-trash!



Be Still My Heart

Anyway, I was concerned about Ariel, so I decided to slither in—to help. I'd watch her and make sure she was safe.

At the time, my crystal ball was one of the newer models. It was pricey, but worth it—it made it pretty easy to keep tabs on the little mermaid. Even so, I missed some things. I didn't know about Ariel's close call with the shark until it was over, which was a real pity. A rescue like that would have impressed King Triton so much. He might have asked me out for coffee, or maybe even dinner!

Anyway, after the shark incident, I realized my expensive, state-of-the-art crystal ball wasn't enough. I needed Flotsam and Jetsam.

F & J, Inc., as they called themselves, were the best private eyes in the business—smart, slippery, seasoned eels who'd been around for years. They knew who Ariel was, of course. Everybody did.

"She's always singing," said Flotsam. "Gets on my nerves."

"She's weird," said Jetsam. "I've seen her poking around shipwrecks and taking things to her grotto."

My heart warmed to them right away.

"Boys," I said, "you're hired. Watch Ariel carefully. And the minute she gets into trouble—any kind of trouble—let me know."







F & J had the night off when Ariel saved Prince Eric from the storm. But I watched the whole thing in my crystal ball. And I have to say, if the eels had told me that Ariel had fallen in love with a human, I wouldn't have believed them. Everybody in the ocean knows that interspecies dating is a no-no. Look what happened when seals and birds got together—penguins!

But our headstrong little princess was madly in love. The day after the shipwreck, all she did was blather on to that crab Sebastian, hatching scheme after scheme to catch Eric's attention. From the sound of it, she'd do almost anything to get to the prince. And one idea was dumber than the next!

I could hardly wait to see which plan she'd try first. No matter what she did, I'd be there to "save" her—and catch Triton's eye.

But before she could do anything, Triton found out about her crush on Eric. He was furious, because he'd always hated humans. They were all over his territory, trespassing, fishing, even littering. So the news that his daughter had fallen for a human really knocked Triton for a loop.

I sat glued to my crystal ball, watching him confront Ariel about her misbehavior. He looked so ruggedly royal when he was angry! Ariel was foolish enough to defend what she'd done, so naturally Triton exploded. He destroyed her junk collection. Then he roared (in a deep, commanding voice) that all humans were strictly off-limits to her.

"Do you understand?" he asked, and she nodded.

He believed her, the big lug, but I didn't. She'd never be able to stay away from Eric. I'd have to be extra vigilant from now on. Fortunately, I had F & J to help me.



My Dark Side, Part 1

I called them in right away. “She’s sulking in the grotto, boys,” I told them. “Get over there! Tell her I can help her, and then bring her in!”

My plan was simple: I’d have a good heart-to-heart with poor Ariel about the ups and downs of true love. Sadly, I was an expert on the subject.

It occurred to me that all Ariel needed was to be human. I could do that. But—Triton would never forgive me. There would be no grateful smiles, no dinner dates. I just couldn’t risk it.

A few minutes later, F & J arrived with Ariel.

“Hello, Princess!” I called. “Welcome to my humble little lair!” She was nervous at first, but after a cup of tea she relaxed. I told her I understood exactly how she was feeling. *Exactly.*

“Daddy refuses to understand!” she whined. “He’s always telling me how much he loves me. But if he really did, he’d let me go!”

And then, suddenly, I felt my dark side stirring. The dreaded signs are always the same. I get very hot, and all my under-tentacles begin to perspire. I get dizzy. My head aches. And then, Bad Ursula emerges.

Bad Ursula is very wicked. She’s strong and heartless and scary—not at all like me—and she does things I’d never, ever do. When she takes over, it’s as if I’m paralyzed. I can watch, but I can’t stop her.

The worst part is, I get blamed for everything she does.



"I think I can help you," Bad Ursula said. "I'll be right back." She returned a moment later with a tiny bottle of liquid. "Swallow this," she told Ariel, "and you'll turn into a human for three days."

Ariel's eyes widened. "Three whole days?" she gasped.

Bad Ursula's twisted smile broadened. "It gets better," she said.

"How would you like to stay with Eric forever?"

"Oh!" Ariel squeaked. "More than anything! But how?"

"Easy," said Bad Ursula. "All you have to do is get the prince to kiss you before the three days are up. Can you do that?"

"Sure," said Ariel, tossing her hair. "I know he likes me."

Bad Ursula chuckled. "Well, good! But it can't be just any old kiss. It's got to be the Kiss of True Love. Do you know what that is?"

"I—I think so," said Ariel.

"Let me spell it out for you, because it's important," said Bad Ursula. "The Kiss of True Love includes the following: lips in extended contact; eyes closed with eyelids fluttering at a minimum speed of forty-five kilometers per hour; body temperature, at least ninety-eight but not exceeding one-hundred-one degrees Fahrenheit; and heart rate accelerated eighteen to thirty-five beats above normal. Got that?"

"Um . . . yes," said Ariel. Bad Ursula had confused her completely!

"If he kisses you before sunset on the third day," Bad Ursula continued, "you'll remain human forever. But if he doesn't, you turn back into a mermaid. And you belong to me."

"If—if I'm human, I won't see my family," Ariel stammered.

Bad Ursula brushed away Ariel's doubts as if they were sea foam. She produced an agreement and got Ariel to sign it. Then she did something deeply shocking. She took Ariel's voice!



LOVE

25%

10%

10%

5%

50%

DON'T

DO





An Appetizer in the Banquet of Evil

The next thing I knew, both Ariel and Bad Ursula were gone. And I was sitting on my sofa with a terrible headache and a lukewarm cup of tea.

My head reeled as I thought about what Bad Ursula had done. She'd been very, very bad! Now, even though Ariel had legs, she couldn't speak, or sing, and there was a good chance she'd end up in Bad Ursula's clutches forever!

I was full of concern for the princess, so I hurried to my crystal ball to search for her. And there she was, on the beach with Eric. The poor thing was a mess. She was drenched, bedraggled, and wrapped in an old sail—not exactly a glamorous look.

She couldn't speak, either, because Bad Ursula had taken her voice. Ariel tried and tried to make Eric understand that she was the one who'd saved his life, but it was hopeless—it was obvious the girl had never, *ever* played charades. Still, Eric took pity on her. He invited her to the palace, and off she wobbled, struggling to keep up with him on her brand-new legs.





Once again, I was glued to my crystal ball, watching Ariel at the palace. I'm happy to say that she looked a lot better once she had washed her hair and changed out of that filthy sail. It was an improvement that Eric noticed, too.

Suddenly, he was interested in her, and not out of pity, either. They became quite the couple—dining, strolling through town, and touring the kingdom together. Ariel looked beyond happy.

Then, on the evening of the second day, Eric invited her to take a boat ride with him. She accepted eagerly. As I watched them gliding on the moonlit lake, I couldn't help wondering if tonight was the night of the Kiss. I started hoping that it was. Ariel did love Eric, after all. Why shouldn't they be together? As for Triton, Mr. Hunky King would get over losing his daughter eventually, especially if he had the help of an adoring mollusk like me!

So I watched, and waited. Eric rowed to a secluded spot. Ariel smiled at him. He smiled back, leaning toward her. He was going to make his move! I was thrilled—I really was.

Then something terrible happened. My temperature shot up. My head began to ache and spin. Dread—and something worse—overpowered me like a two-ton fishing net.

It was Bad Ursula! She took me over with a hideous screech, and I could only watch in anguish as she ordered Flotsam and Jetsam to capsize the boat. They overturned it that instant, tipping Ariel and Eric into the lake.

"No kiss tonight!" Bad Ursula gloated, watching the very wet couple climb back into the boat. "Guess I put a damper on things! Sorry!"

But she wasn't sorry at all. She was just getting started.

A Confession

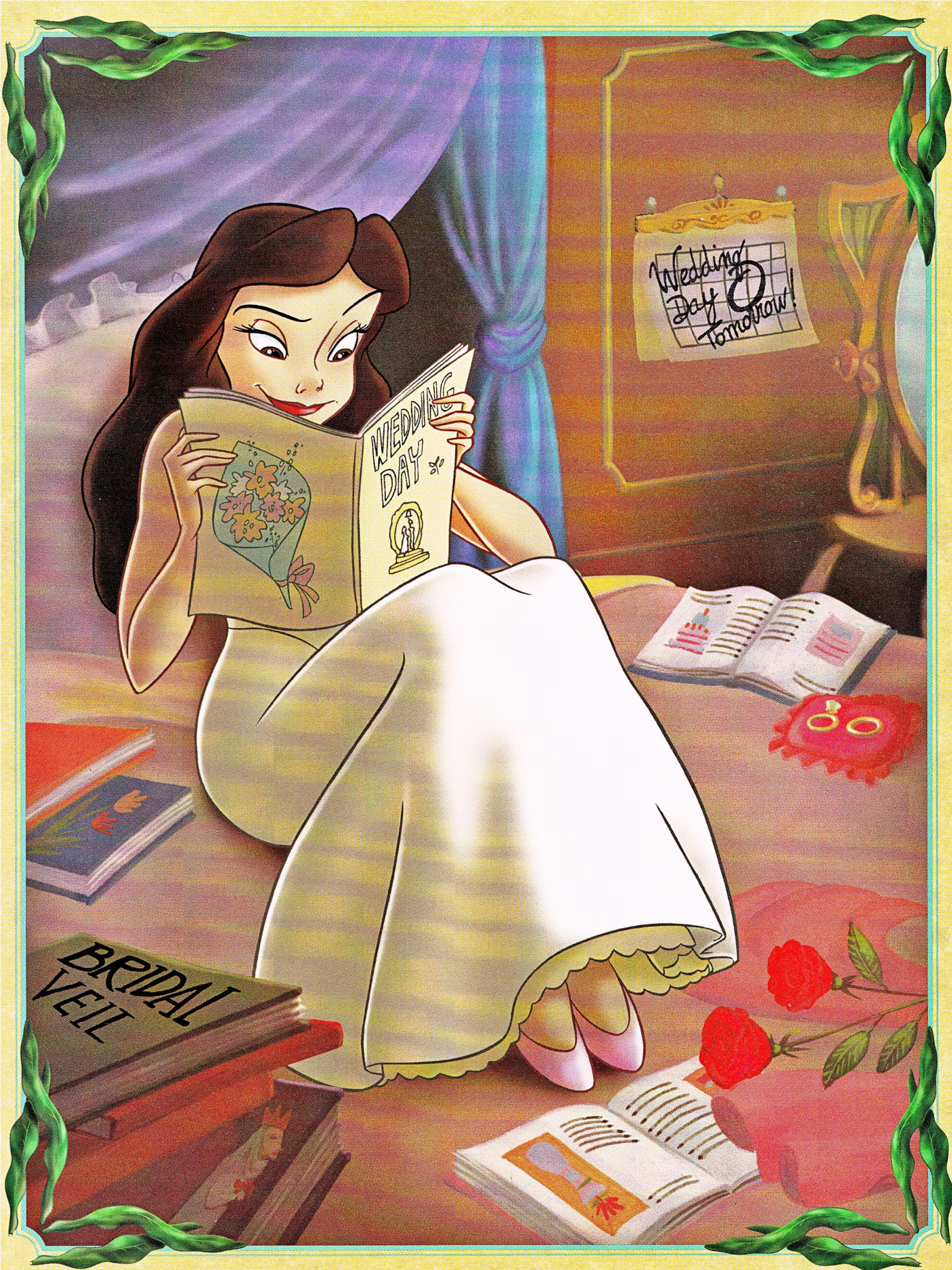
You see, unlike me, Bad Ursula wasn't content to lead a quiet life of kind words and good deeds. She wanted power. I dreamed of a date with King Triton; she dreamed of ruling the seven seas.

And while I bumbled through life in my innocent, good-hearted way, performing random acts of simple kindness, Bad Ursula had an evil master plan for destroying Triton and taking his place.

It all hinged on Ariel. If Bad Ursula succeeded in enslaving the princess, Triton would give anything—even his kingdom—to get her back. I *told* you it was an evil plan! And I couldn't let that happen to my love.

After she kept Eric from kissing Ariel, Bad Ursula made sure he'd never try again. Later that night, she used her strongest magic to turn herself into an alluring young woman with a bewitching voice.

"Vanessa," as she called herself, worked quickly. By the next day she'd convinced Eric that he loved her. Before he could say "prenuptial agreement," she'd called a caterer, hired a band, and ordered flowers for the royal barge. "The wedding's at five," she told him.





My Dark Side, Part 2

And that's exactly when the wedding began. But it never finished, because Ariel and her friends showed up and stopped it. Actually, they turned it into a free-for-all, complete with a wedding-cake food fight. By the time they were finished, Ariel had her voice back, Eric knew she was the One, and they were puckering up for the Kiss of True Love.

Vanessa watched, seething. It looked as if Bad Ursula's evil plan was dead in the water.

But—no. Before their lips could touch, the sun went down, and Ariel turned back into a mermaid. Vanessa turned back into Bad Ursula. And, as she was quick to remind Ariel, the princess was no longer free.

"You signed an agreement, remember?" Bad Ursula sneered. "You belong to me now!" With that she dragged poor Ariel back into the ocean. As the girl whimpered, Bad Ursula taunted Triton.

"Think of it, Triton," she said gleefully, "your little free spirit is free no more! She's going to spend the rest of her life working for me, doing whatever I tell her to do, including floors and windows! She won't get time off for good behavior, either!"



Ariel burst into hysterical tears at this glimpse of her terrible future. Triton protested, but Bad Ursula only smiled. Then she moved into another phase of her evil master plan.

“Of course,” she said slyly, “I might be willing to take a substitute. Somebody . . . muscular, who can handle heavy housework.”

Triton took the bait. “I—I’ll go in her place,” he said heavily. He kissed Ariel, who stammered that she was sorry. Then, without another word, he gave his trident to Bad Ursula.

The next part of this story is a little embarrassing.

The truth is, the trident didn’t do a lot for Bad Ursula’s personality. Talk about violent mood swings! As soon as she got the trident, she went berserk, waving it around and screaming that she ruled the seven seas. Then—as if she needed any more attention—she blew up to fifty times her size, until she looked like Barbados.

Stop, Bad Ursula! I prayed, but it was no use. She stirred the ocean into a whirlpool that swallowed Ariel, whipped up a storm that sank Eric, and shot some thunderbolts at a pair of seagulls just for fun.

“Ha!” she ranted, as the winds wailed and lightning flashed around her oversized head. “Nothing can stop me now!”

She was wrong.

Something very sharp—I think it may have been the broken mast of a sunken ship, but I’m not sure—flew at Bad Ursula from behind and punctured her like a balloon. She screamed piercingly. At the same time, three bolts of lightning decided to hold a meeting in her head and alter her brain chemistry. This caused a deafening sizzle.

Bad Ursula tottered. She reeled. And then she exploded.



ARTWORK FOR
THIS PAGE
HAS BEEN
LOST!!



Picking up the Pieces

I'll never forget that day, because it marked the dawn of a new era. Bad Ursula disappeared. Her slaves regained their freedom. King Triton's power was restored, and he finally dropped his grudge against the human race. Ariel's life as a mermaid came to a close, Eric gave up his title as Most Eligible Bachelor in the Kingdom, and the two finally shared the Kiss of True Love. Their wedding took place (without a hitch) that very same day.

As for me, even though Bad Ursula was blown to smithereens, I survived. It took me a while to recover from the explosion, but I did, and when I could think clearly again, I made up my mind: if I was going to live with only one personality, I wanted it to be a good one.

So I sat myself down and took stock. What were my skills? My shortcomings? My goals? Where did I want to be ten years from now?

After days of soul-searching, my path revealed itself. I enrolled in Sri Baba Sardine's Yoga-Beauty-Unity School and threw myself into my studies. I explored everything from Whale Harmonics to Dolphin Aerobics, until it became crystal clear where my talents lay.

Special
Today

UP SUL'S
Harmony
Day
Spa





I had always had eight strong tentacles; now I had focus and dedication, too. With Healing Massage as my major, I graduated first in my class. Sri Baba himself helped me to set up my practice. I have eight massage rooms, all with ambient lighting and aromatherapy, and more clients than I can handle.

It's a good life, and I make an excellent living. I'm happier now than I've ever been. And yet . . . in rare moments of quiet, my mind always conjures up the same image: a handsome older man with fabulous hair, wearing a crown and carrying a trident. His job is pressured, and I can see that he's stressed.

If anyone needs a healing massage, it's King Triton.
When he books an appointment, I'll be waiting.